

City of Greenfield, Massachusetts
Sustainable Greenfield Implementation Committee (SGIC)

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Minutes

Thursday 2/25/2021, 5:00-6:30pm

Attending: Nancy Hazard, Jacob Frank, Phil Elmer, MJ Adams, Carole Collins, Jay Lord, Mike Pattavina **Absent:** Marlo Warner, George Touloumtzis, Hannah Rechtschaffen, Tara Kurland
Clerk: Laurie DiDonato **Guests:** Lindsay Rowe, Tim Grader, Robert Williford

Called to order- 5:04

Introductions/Updates-

MJ Adams, Director Community & Economic Development, fills the Department of Planning & Development seat

- Green River Festival will happen this year! Hurray – things opening up! Feeling of optimism.
- City received Rapid Recover Funds!
- Bee Fest will be held in May – virtually. BUT watch for Bee sculptures throughout town-they will be unveiled!
- Northeast Biodiesel plant opening in Greenfield Industrial Park! Many years in the making.
- New Brewery coming to town Four Phantoms. Where Lefty's used to be

Nancy Hazard, At Large member –

- Highland Park Vernal Pool: Nancy met with Stephen Plotkin; Pat Serrentino, ecologist; and Cassie Tragert, Greenfield Conservation Agent, inspected the pool, and created a plan to move forward that included ongoing monitoring, and a recommendation that a sign be added to explain this valuable resource and request that dogs be kept out of this sensitive ecological resource.
- New Library – Many thanks to Carole Collins for continuing to advocate for an excellent “building envelope” so that we can have a comfortable zero-net energy building. Unfortunately, the committee did not support paying the additional \$100,000 for the heat mirror windows. (Very disappointing to say the least.) The windows, however, are first on the “alt. add” list, so if adequate funds they will be the first item to be added back into the project.
- Downtown \$\$- great to see Council OK'd seed money for continuing to explore options in upgrading downtown landscape. Kudos to all involved. Looking forward to details.

Mike Pattavina, At Large member

- Struggling with enforced isolation. Hoping it will end soon!

Phil Elmer, City Council representative –

- Council voted to support economic development by rolling out the red carpet for marijuana:
 - Council raised allowable cap from 5,000 sq. ft. to 100,000 sq. ft.
 - Extended commercial zoning in one area, so that a marijuana company could move in if it wishes to.

Real Estate in Greenfield Discussion - Tim Grader, from Cohn and Company, attended the meeting to discuss real estate trends in Greenfield.

- There has been an increase in home values over the past year likely due to the effects of pandemic relocation. Numbers available from the Mass Association of Realtors show that home values are up 8.3% and the number of days on the market has dropped 50%.
- Most people choosing Greenfield have learned of it by having visited or known people from the area. Marketing could be a benefit to Greenfield, but it needs to be done wisely because it is expensive and the goal needs to be determined. Marketing won't help make affordable homes for people who currently live here.
- Commercial real estate is a different story and is having a very difficult time due to the pandemic. Some tenants are in talks to break their lease. The vaccine and stimulus funding should help many small businesses, but many have difficulty with applications. Our best strategy is to support local stores as much as we can.
- Helping the Greenfield Coop find a new home is critical for the success of the downtown. They desperately need a new location and are currently considering several options.
- Infill residential development downtown would be helpful but is financially difficult (\$100/sqft to renovate, \$250/sqft for new construction) and usually requires a lot of public funding. It may also require zoning changes. Code upgrades create an additional hurdle.
- One strategy is to encourage further development for high end housing. This type of housing quickly becomes affordable housing. In the meantime these residents support the financial needs of businesses.
- Post-pandemic will there be a change in office space needs? Possibly, but there is disagreement about the productivity working from home between employees and employers.
- Commercial PACE lending will provide help to businesses
- City should keep its office space and events downtown as much as possible.

Minutes from January meeting- MJ made a motion to approve the minutes. Carole seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reorganization- MJ made a motion to keep Hannah as chair, George as vice chair and Phil as clerk for the coming year. Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Guest speaker for committee meetings-

Suggestions were given for future guest speakers at meetings and included:

- Ives Salomon-Fernandez from GCC. MJ will ask her.
- Peg Beringer – one of the consultants that did downtown study. MJ will ask her.
- Someone from the Franklin County Food Council
- Mary Chicoine – To discuss trees in Greenfield - inventory and trends
- Someone to follow up on the Housing forum.
- Jeff Saucer – to discuss planning and urban design around sustainability
- Rachael Katz from the cultural district
- It was suggested to look back at surveys from community gatherings to find possible topics

There was discussion around having a virtual community gathering. We will pick that up next month

Laurie announced that she is available to contribute time to mining the Master Plan and would like to work with others on determining what key goals are. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

Next Meeting is March 25th.

Meeting Adjourned 6:05 pm